

Region Three Citizens' Advisory Committee
FWP Headquarters – Bozeman
March 29, 2012

CAC Attendees: Sam Samson, Joe Cohenour, David Gibson, LeRoy Mehring, Robin Cunningham, Rick Arnold, William Mealer, Barb Cestero, Ken Sinay, Cyndy Andrus

CAC Absent: Rick Grady

FWP Staff Present: Pat Flowers, Andrea Jones, Christine Marozick, Joan Buhl, Travis Horton, Howard Burt

Guests: Richard Lessner

Greetings, introductions, roundtable and public comment – Pat Flowers

Overview of Agenda

Pat – It's been an active winter for wolf discussion, with an active political scene, especially for Jefferson and Ravalli counties. Vanna went to the Jefferson County hearing to discuss the bounty proposed by county. It is still subject to FWP regulations, seasons, etc. Bounty programs typically haven't been very successful.

Following that we had another meeting with the Upper Jefferson Watershed Committee. It was a good meeting with lots of questions, lots of clarification on rumors which were circulating. Ranchers and sportsman are frustrated by perceived and actual impacts of wolves. They blame FWP since we are in charge of management. I reminded them we inherited a large population of wolves. We had initially submitted comments and opposed that system. We wanted to let the natural system unfold for the current population of wolves. We have only had one year of management. I want to share this with CAC since you may receive questions on the issue as well.

Now that wolves are here they are welcome and need to be managed in prey/predator populations.

Ken – I hear people complain etc. Are they really losing lots of livestock? Ultimately the goal is to enhance wildlife diversity – is that ever brought up in public dialog?

Pat – Yellowstone National Park makes that point. We may not. We end up defending instead of giving affirmative statements.

Ken – Quota management should be another segment of the management.

Pat - This is going to be an issue that takes a long time to fade. Gallatin County has now taken up the issue, and is having hearings regarding wolves May 3 and May 30. Commissioner Bill Murdoch wants nothing to do with this. Joe Skinner is one of, if not *the*, Commissioner who is championing the issue. He wants as much info as possible. We will be there to bring facts on predator/prey populations.

David – How did counties handle bounty effectiveness?

Sam- Elk Foundation announced that they are giving \$50,000 for predator control – where will that money go?

Joe – As part of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, I hadn't heard anything until I read it in the paper.

Pat- The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation saw it in their best interest to make a stance, but I'm not sure where the money is going.

Pat – Bison, as always, have been a large part of my time lately. We had good dialog with the public at the IBMP meeting. The most important thing from the discussion was the response to the recommendation on allowing bison outside the Park on Horse Butte. There was agreement from all

departments. We may soon pursue an environmental review. We are still unclear on a decision, but we potentially could see year round bison in MT in a much broader landscape. So they will no longer be harassed back into YNP.

This will help us continue to manage bison in MT as opposed to shipping them to slaughter.

Roundtable:

Ken - Any comment on transferring bison to Fort Peck?

Pat – That was taken to Helena and we have had zero involvement.

Bill – Mapping of bighorn sheep habitat suitability for Gravelly's and Tobacco Roots. Talk to FS on what can be done. Need to work with public land domestic sheep grazers. CMR just did exchange with grazers who had domestic sheep next to wild sheep. CMR has grazing 8-9 months, whereas Gravelly's only have 4-5 months of grazing. Maps would help get sheep back to Gravelly's.

Cyndy – Fluoride is a big issue with the city right now. Any research on fish in the Gallatin? Is the fluoride harming fish?

Barb- public land issue

David – no additional issues

Ken – Grizzly bears. Rancher outside the north end of park brought up a point about subsidized (supplemental) feeding. He has bears on his property; older sows with several young. Does supplemental feeding have an impact on older bears still producing young?

Pat – No. The only supplemental feeding I am aware of is not in MT. The only place it may happen is with conflicts in the fall in Gardiner Basin where carcasses are put in the dump to draw bears away from conflict areas. If it's happening, it's to draw a bear out of an area, not to feed it. Not a significant enough amount to change their body condition.

LeRoy – Robb-Ledford Game Range is supposed to be sold/traded. I would like to know where we are with that.

Pat – This is an agency decision and recommendation. We are working with DNRC. FWP would trade Rob Ledford's 17,000 deeded acres plus 10,000 leased acres with DNRC. We would get in holdings DNRC has in other WMA's, including Spotted Dog. This is due to go out for public scoping on Friday as a proposal. We would like to create a healthy grazing system, like the one on Wall Creek. There may be a need for habitat improvements, but that plan may be cut off if the property gets traded.

Rick – At the Trout Unlimited State Council meeting recently, the big issue was the Lake Trout problem in Swan Lake in the Flathead. Like other nonnative fish, they will continue to spread to other lakes. Any discussion about Lake Trout in R3?

Travis – We have native lake trout in R3. For instance in Mystic Lake, which is isolated. The issues with Swan Lake are concerns about bull trout. From R3 perspective, they are not really on our radar. We don't want to have lake trout in Clark Canyon or Harrison, but there's not really a chance for them to get there. The bottom line is that we don't want to see them here, but we're not too worried about it at this point.

Rick - TU also questioned whether a state fisheries plan is being worked on.

Travis – The State office is initiating a state fisheries management plan. It's probably a year out on having a draft. We're examining Idaho's model for a plan.

Rick – Travis and I talked about Bozeman schools and expanding trout programs in the classroom. A Sacajawea teacher wants to come speak with us. We would like to try and get a meeting before school is out.

Travis – Once those fish are grown and school is out, we have to try to find somewhere to put them. Otherwise they have to kill them. Don't want to send wrong message about where fish come by creating a hatchery situation.

Ken – There should be some aquatic education involved in schools. Any issue with taking wild fish and putting in school aquarium?

Travis – We wouldn't want to put them back for fear of diseases etc.

Rick – PPL verdict - any idea how that will effect stream access?

Pat – It won't affect it at all. Excludes stream access.

Rick – Can we publish that in the newspaper or regulations? There is a lot of public confusion. (*Andrea will follow up.*)

Richard – A rancher in Ruby, James Cox Kennedy, recently filed a lawsuit in Madison County. The lawyer said the state has jurisdiction over navigable rivers.

Rick – TU is trying to find tributaries on the upper Madison for in stream flow projects.

LeRoy – Concerned about a proposed barrier on DNRC land to be paid for by Turner.

Joe – I was recently named to Elk Brucellosis management team. They are looking for solutions on how to get rid of elk brucellosis interaction. One of Wyoming's solutions was to not hunt scavengers on birthing grounds. Instead, allow scavengers to consume the aborted fetus instead of allowing cows to come in contact.

Had a phone call from friend (Rick Foster) in the Elkhorns who was concerned about population of elk. The objective is 2,000 head. Current count is about 1,100. Since the area is managed for trophy bulls, why are they still allowing youth hunts if they are still so far from the objective numbers? Rick Foster has seen a lot of wounded cows in the Elkhorns. What's FWP doing to get the population back toward objective? Joe suggested his friend Rick email Howard and Pat.

Robin – No comments.

Sam – Vince Yannone would be great resource for fish in school issue.

Travis – Fluoride found to not affect fish in another study.

Update on the Madison River Recreation Management Planning Process – Travis

We have had scoping meetings around R3 which seemed to go fairly well. 1,150 people filled out the online survey and we are currently working on quantifying those submissions. We also sent out a request for proposals to facilitate the process. We only had one applicant, which was a good one, Ginny Tribe. We just finalized that contract.

We received 33 applications for the Madison River CAC. The applicants had very broad interests, both resident and nonresident. These are currently being reviewed. Ginny Tribe (facilitator) is not available until May 1st.

Committee (advisory panel) will be given a tremendous amount of info in order to make recommendations on recreation management. Agency will draft a plan from that for public comment.

Pat – There are lots of rumors. We have no preconceived notions for the Madison Recreation Plan. We need all interests at the table to have the group design the plan. The best time to take on a problem is before it's a crisis.

Ken - (Paraphrased rules from FWP River Recreation Rules). What different values are given to different parts of the river? Concerned that the Lower Madison is in special recreation management plan, not recognized for values it affords.

Pat – I know of special advocates for unique qualities of the lower river. Bring your concerns to the public meeting. I have a lot of faith in the facilitator so that all voices are heard and a fair plan is reached.

Travis – SRP is not truly a "plan." Question of BLM and lack of involvement even though they have land on the river.

Pat – This is going to be a river recreation plan. We will have primary authority and BLM wants to cooperate with us. They will not be a partner in the process of developing plan.

Update on Region 3 CAC applicant selection – Pat

50 applications. Held off making appointments due to budgeting. We have made the decision to go ahead and fill all 5 vacancies.

Recap of Hunting Regulation Changes as approved by FWP Commission-Howard

It was a biennial season setting process this year. We had 10 meetings across R3. Final recommendations went in with a lot of public comment. (Read through regulation changes and tentatives approved.)

The quota range can change within that range depending on wildlife surveys. Permit/license quantities can change from what regulations say. Changed the range so we have the ability to go as low as 5 licenses.

Elk: big changes in Paradise Valley.

313 – unlimited bull permits. Took away 30 split antlerless licenses.

314- brow tine on general tag

317- brow tine on general plus 250 cow tags

332 – brow tine bull

339 – spike or antlerless for full season

343 – brow tined bull

360/362 – working group made recommendations – brow tined bull for season. 450 B licenses spread throughout season. 50 first week, 100 each subsequent week. Only allowed 1 elk from area. Mandatory harvest report number. Pilot to see how mandatory reporting will work.

Antelope:

Dropped doe/fawn in 311

Moose:

Removed antlerless opportunity in 319, 323, 325, 326, 340, 350. Moose numbers are dropping. 306, 307, 310 – one bull license available in 310. Made one license available for all three districts.

Bighorn Sheep: Spanish peaks 301 – 5 either sex.

302: added ewe licenses. Range 5-20. Lots of sheep in small winter range. Worried about die off. 200 + sheep, would like to have 120-140. Will propose adding 20 ewe licenses. Not sure how much we will actually harvest. Having trouble finding places to move sheep.

Bill – Governor's tag – giving away genetically superior sheep to other states. Have any of these been transplanted to R3?

Howard – Yes the Tendoy's. Wildhorse Island is a priority to move sheep out of when a spot becomes available to move them to, since it is an island and a super producer of sheep.

Wildlife Management Update- Howard

Wolves – May commission will look at tentative wolf season. One idea is to create a season similar to Idaho's season with no quotas, just a regulated season length. An option would be to keep quotas around the Park. Numbers are up for discussion.

Considering trapping and snaring Dec 15 – Feb 28. Hopefully a December 15 start date will avoid catching bear cubs. Snaring is an effective method of catching wolves. If we did allow trapping, there would be a mandatory trapping course specifically for wolves. Pass or fail. Mandatory 72 hour check. Right now a hunter or trapper can only possess one wolf. Legislation on that would have to be changed.

Barb – Encouraged maintaining wolf quotas in WMU’s surrounding Greater Yellowstone area. Maybe trapping and snaring are too much too soon for the public.

Howard – Tentative decision by May, decision final by July.

Bison – Pat

Lawsuits regarding tolerance zone expansion were rescheduled. Plaintiff’s attorney removed due to conflict of interest. Rescheduled for full trial for 4 days in August.

Another lawsuit filed for freedom of information regarding Yellowstone bison.

Bill Mealer’s Questions:

Would it be possible to create 2-3 unlimited bighorn ram tags in the Gallatin Range and possibly southern Madison range?

Howard: Would have to be looked at a lot closer. Gallatin would get too much pressure. Madison would be worth a discussion.

Sam Sheppard: There would be a lot of competition and possibly some unsavory elements would come into the hunting.

Bill: Status of elk capture tests? Next step in SW MT?

Pat: Neil Anderson wrote up summary (hand out)

Latest Operations and Findings of Elk Brucellosis Study

Objective:

Evaluate the presence of brucellosis among elk in southwestern Montana improve understanding of how elk herd interact.

- 2012 was second year of multi-year study
- 130 cow elk captured and tested
 - 30 captured south of Bannack
 - 93 captured southeast of Dillon in HD 325
 - 7 “recaptures” of elk collared in 2011
- All animals captured south of Bannack tested negative for exposure to brucellosis
- 5 animals in SE portion of HD 325
- 30 GPS collars were placed on elk in HD 325
- The 7 recaptured elk were refitted with GPS collars
 - Elk were part of last year’s capture operations near the Blacktail WMA and tested positive for exposure at that time
 - Five of those animals were pregnant
 - All still tested positive for exposure to brucellosis
- 5 animals died in the process of capture. Samples were collected and their meat was donated to a local food bank.
- All elk shown to be positive for exposure in the course of this study are fitted with GPS collars (if pregnant they are implanted with radio devices). Additional GPS collars are placed on animals that test negative for exposure to improve understanding of movements and interaction with adjoining herds.
- Any elk that test positive for exposure to brucellosis for five years will be removed from the population
- FWP is working with the Montana Department of Livestock in evaluating the relevance of these findings
- Similar efforts will continue in additional areas in coming years if funding remains available

Sam Sheppard – summarized status of enforcement of SRP

Not bringing guide log books back this year. Beaverhead/Big Hole – no overuse of days last year.

Continue to evaluate violation rights. “Education through citation.” Encouraged by outfitters response and support.

Discussion

Respect Your Rivers – Rick

Last year’s budget \$1500 went in one month. Would like to aim for \$3000 and two months in the summer this year. Will FWP continue to help RYR financially?

Pat – Not sure. Will look into it. *(Pat will follow up.)*

Awareness – Putting stickers like on newspaper on fishing regulations. *Look into pricing and logistics.*

Cyndy would like to see this program sustain itself and have FWP supplement if needed.

Subcommittee to meet after first week of April: David, Rick, Bill and Richard

CAC Caucus:

Ken – state land in Upper Gallatin, dirt pile would make great watchable wildlife area

Public Comment:

None.

2012 Calendar

March 29

June 20

September 12

December 5

Meeting adjourned.